


Texas Department of Health

The Commissioner's Report to the Board of Health

December 5, 2003

Hot Topics



Influenza (Flu)

TDH's latest flu report (for the week ending Nov. 22) classifies flu activity in the state as "widespread." The classification is based on influenza being recorded in at least half of the state's 11 public health regions. Flu was recorded in all 11 regions last week.

"Widespread" is the highest occurrence category. Last week was the sixth consecutive week that flu activity has been classified as "widespread" in Texas.

Laboratory tests have confirmed that influenza type A/Panama-like and type A/Fujian-like viruses are circulating in Texas. Influenza type B has also been confirmed, but strain information is pending.

This season's vaccine was formulated to protect against type A/Panama, type A/New Caledonia and type B/Hong Kong and is expected to offer some protection against the Fujian strain.

During this reporting week, influenza A and/or undifferentiated flu has been identified in Bastrop, Bell, Brazoria, Brazos, Eastland, Lubbock, Harris, McLennan, Tom Green, Walker, and Williamson counties. Increased absenteeism rates have been reported from school districts in Kaufman and El Paso counties. *For more information, contact Neil Pascoe, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail neil.pascoe@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Meeting with Representatives of the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

TDH held a one-day meeting with high-level representatives of the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS). Dr. Ed Thompson, CDC's deputy director for public health services, and Joe Henderson, the associate director for terrorism preparedness and emergency response, along with others from CDC and DHHS, spent the day talking to TDH staff and many of our partners. TDH provided a full-scale update of our activities in bioterrorism and public health preparedness as well as a tour of our new public health laboratory. *For more information, contact Dennis Perrotta, Office of the State Epidemiologist, at (512) 458-7219 or e-mail dennis.perrotta@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Obesity in Texas

On October 6-7, staff from the Bureau of Nutrition Services (BNS) coordinated a meeting for the Texas State Strategic Health Partnership (TSSHP) Goal A Workgroup (promote healthy eating and safe physical activity). Approximately 70 partners/stakeholders from

across the state met in Austin to decide on action items for the implementation of objectives in the *Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Obesity in Texas*. Ann Pauli (Paso Del Norte Health Foundation, El Paso) and Joan Miller (Health Collaborative, San Antonio) are the co-chairs of the workgroup. Travel for the partners was supported by the CDC-funded obesity-prevention grant. Barbara Keir, BNS and Anne Williamson, Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention and Control, are the TDH staffers assigned to the Goal A Workgroup. *For more information, contact Barbara Keir, WIC Program, at (512) 458-7111, ext.1-2144, or e-mail barbara.keir@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Obesity

During the first quarter of fiscal year 2004, the Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Obesity in Texas was presented to several health professional groups in east Texas as follows:

- 48 school nurses from the northeast Texas area through training sponsored by Education Service Center Region VIII (Mount Pleasant) on September 2.
- 33 public health nurses and clinic support staff from Public Health Region 4/5 North (Tyler) on October 29.
- 39 dietitians from the east Texas area through the East Texas District Dietetic Association (Longview) on November 14.

Objectives for the program included: 1) increase awareness of the growing problem of obesity; 2) share "Texas Strategic Plan..." as developed by the Texas Statewide Obesity Task Force; and 3) engage these health professionals as partners in developing solutions.

Included in the presentation were background and statistics related to the problem of childhood and adult obesity in Texas and review of the four goals and related objectives of the "Strategic Plan..." School nurses and dietitians completed an interactive activity identifying how they could be personally involved in actions to solve this problem. *For more information, contact Susan Bennett, Nutrition Services, at (903) 533-5316 or e-mail susan.bennett@tdh.state.tx.us.*



New Immunization Media Campaign Launched

The Bureau of Immunization & Pharmacy Support (BIPS) launched the TDH Immunization Awareness Media Campaign a \$1.5 million advertising campaign to encourage parents to get their children 2 years old and younger vaccinated against measles, mumps, polio, pertussis and other preventable and sometimes life-threatening illnesses. The campaign, which includes billboards and radio, television and print ads in English and Spanish, will be placed in the Amarillo, Lubbock, Dallas-Fort Worth, Tyler-Longview, Beaumont-Port Arthur, Houston, Austin, San Antonio, Corpus Christi, El Paso and Lower Rio Grande Valley markets. A TDH press release announcing the media campaign was issued on December 3, and included a photo of Texas First Lady Anita Perry and Commissioner of Health Eduardo Sanchez with infants and toddlers. The immunization media campaign was produced for TDH by Interlex USA, a San Antonio advertising agency.

On November 20, Dr. Sanchez participated in an immunizations media campaign event in Waco with Blue Cross/Blue Shield's Care Van program. On December 6, Dr. Sanchez

and the First Lady will participate in another immunizations Care Van media event in Austin. TDH is working with the First Lady's Office, the Governor's Commission for Women, the Texas Medical Association (TMA), the TMA Foundation, and the TMA Alliance to coordinate campaign efforts and strategically use the First Lady's participation in associated activities. Future plans include TMA invitations to Dr. Sanchez and the First Lady to speak about immunizations at the TMA conference on February 28, 2004. *For more information, contact Casey Blass, Bureau of Immunization & Pharmacy Support, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail casey.blass@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Records 374 Human Cases of West Nile Virus; 28 Deaths

TDH has recorded 374 human cases of West Nile in 77 Texas counties this year, including 28 deaths.

The 28 deaths occurred among residents of Burnet, Castro, Cherokee, Cameron, Dallas (3), Ellis, El Paso (3), Harris (3), Hidalgo (2), Lubbock (2), Montgomery, Potter, Randall (2), San Patricio, Smith, Taylor, Travis, Wharton and Wichita counties.

Human cases have occurred in Andrews (3), Angelina (5), Armstrong (1), Bailey (1), Bexar (4), Brazos (4), Burnet (1), Caldwell (1), Callahan (2), Cameron (10), Castro (4), Chambers (1), Cherokee (1), Clay (1), Cochran (1), Collin (3), Cooke (2), Dallas (47), Deaf Smith (4), Denton (6), Donley (1), Ector (3), Ellis (5), El Paso (37), Erath (1), Falls (1), Floyd (1), Galveston (1), Gray (1), Gregg (7), Hale (4), Hall (1), Harris (42), Harrison (1), Hemphill (1), Hidalgo (12), Hockley (1), Hunt (2), Hutchinson (1), Jefferson (5), Johnson (3), Jones (1), Kaufman (1), Lamb (1), Lubbock (25), Maverick (1), Midland (6), Montgomery (17), Moore (1), Nacogdoches (1), Nueces (3), Oldham (1), Orange (3), Panola (2), Polk (1), Potter (3), Randall (17), Rusk (1), San Patricio (2), Shackelford (1), Smith (6), Starr (2), Swisher (2), Tarrant (14), Taylor (2), Terry (1), Titus (2), Tom Green (1), Travis (12), Waller (1), Washington (1), Webb (1), Wharton (1), Wichita (4), Willacy (1), Wise (1) and Wood (1) counties.

West Nile has been detected in humans, birds, mosquitoes or horses in 180 Texas counties in 2003. In 2002 -- the first year West Nile was found in Texas -- the virus was detected in 213 of Texas' 254 counties. There were 202 human cases, including 13 deaths. *For more information contact Jim Schuermann, Zoonosis Control Division, at (512) 458-7255 or e-mail jim.schuermann@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Consolidation Updates



Purchasing and Contract Administration Consolidation

HHSC directed agencies to proceed with the transfer of staff identified as performing in-scope functions. Staff transferred effective on October 1. Robert Morris was named Acting Procurement Director on October 9. Bob Burnette was named on October 20 as Acting Assistant Director under Robert Morris. The director is reviewing the organizational structure of the new division. Standardization and improvement efforts on procurement policies, procedures and processes have begun. A contract process improvement workgroup was formed to address improvements and standardization of client service contracting and monitoring practices and to develop a website. Melanie Doyle was named to be the TDH representative on this workgroup. After subsequent

meetings held with TDH executive management and transfer of purchasing supervisors and employees, a new organization chart was put into effect for TDH procurement and contracting with the Administrative Service Centers (ASC) combined into a central procurement group in order to achieve greater efficiencies and to avoid duplication of efforts. *For more information, contact Bob Burnette at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-6951, or e-mail bob.burnette@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Civil Rights Consolidation

Staff performing in-scope functions transferred to HHSC, effective October 1. Herman Horn has been selected to direct the HHS System Civil Rights Office. *For more information, contact Herman Horn at (512) 458-7627 or e-mail herman.horn@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Planning and Evaluations Consolidation

The interim director of the enterprise planning and evaluation office, Rick Allgeyer, reviewed the list of in-scope planning and evaluation products. Mr. Allgeyer met with some agencies and plans to meet with others and the consolidation workgroup before finalizing the list. It is anticipated that tasks related to some of these products will occur at the agency level instead of the consolidated office, or might involve a lower level of attention from the enterprise office. HHSC has not yet directed that employees performing in-scope functions transfer. *For more information, contact Rick Danko, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6566, or e-mail rick.danko@tdh.state.tx.us; or Elaine Powell, at (512) 458-7303 or e-mail elaine.powell@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Information Technology Consolidation

Interviews for HHSC IT Director position are being scheduled. Agencies have been instructed to begin using the project portfolio management system and have been asked to begin entering projects into this system in the next few weeks. Information Systems will provide guidance for entering the information. The IT consolidation group was asked to develop a “Two Year Technology Roadmap.” Additional subgroups are being formed to provide content for this roadmap. The IT Architecture subgroup published its Project Plan to develop the Architecture, including IT Governance. Project completion is scheduled for January 31, 2004. Judy Sandberg is the project leader. TDH has submitted a list of employees to HHSC who are performing IT in-scope functions. The financial information will be submitted after it has been certified. *For more information, contact Tom Thornton at (512) 458-7271 or e-mail tom.thornton@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Ombudsman Consolidation

The consolidation proposal will be presented to Commissioner Hawkins this week. Under the proposal, legislative inquiries on behalf of a constituent and customer relations would remain at the individual agencies. A recommendation has been made that information and referral be studied by the Information and Referral Consolidation Workgroup that is in the process of being formed. The study of 800 numbers is a joint project of both workgroups. One result may be to recommend that these numbers be routed through the 211 Internet backbone in order to save costs. This would require additional capital authority. A list of terms has been developed as well as an overview of current customer service activities at each agency. Next steps are to: 1) review data elements from various customer service automated systems for use in the potential development of a

consolidated system; and 2) begin development of a standardized policy and procedure manual. *For more information, contact Jackie McDonald, at (512) 458-7484 or e-mail jackie.mcdonald@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Financial Services Consolidation

The CFO Recommendation for the Consolidated Financial Services has been approved by the Executive Commissioner with two modifications. All grants will be approved by HHSC to ensure consistency with policy direction. Additionally, the forecasting function will be consolidated along with rate setting at the HHSC. Next steps include a detailed definition of each centralized function, policy and coding standardizations necessary to support decentralization, development of a staffing plan, and development of an implementation timeline. *For more information, contact Machel Pharr, at (512) 458-77640 or e-mail machelle.pharr@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Consolidation Workgroup for the Office of the Inspector General

Workgroup leaders and the steering committee met with Brian Flood, the newly appointed Inspector General, on November 7, to discuss the functional reviews that were submitted to HHSC on October 31. Mr. Flood announced that consolidation of investigative functions would take place on December 15, rather than January 1, 2004. It was also announced that the OIG would be formed and operated with existing staff consolidated from the agencies with no new resources except for new functions implemented. There was considerable discussion about audit functions. Mr. Flood stated that if the monitoring and audit functions were utilized to identify risk, then he considered them to be in-scope for consolidation. Agencies will have an opportunity to present their justifications for not transferring any functions they feel are out-of-scope. However, a recommendation is expected to HHSC that all auditor functions be moved. Mr. Flood also announced that the OIG would be formed and operated with existing staff consolidated from the agencies with no new resources unless new functions are implemented. It was also indicated that staff performing in-scope functions will be notified on December 15 that they will transfer effective on January 1, 2004. *For more information, contact Lonzo Kerr, at (512) 458-7431 or e-mail lonzo.kerr@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Consolidation of Eligibility

A further review of the programs listed in HB 2292 as mandated for consolidation of eligibility showed the WIC Program is not one of the mandated Chapter 33 Human Resources programs referenced in HB 2292. Therefore, the project team is now considering the WIC Program to be out-of-scope in this phase of the project. TDH will continue to participate as a member of the workgroup to stay informed. *For more information, contact Valerie Wolfe, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-2072, or e-mail valerie.wolfe@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Business Intelligence Workgroup

HHSC established a workgroup to assess and recommend a series of daily, weekly, and monthly management reports that provide the business intelligence necessary to support management of the HHS enterprise. The workgroup researched best practices in business intelligence systems and compiled an inventory of management reports currently used by health and human service agency executives. In its November 26, 2003 final report, the workgroup proposed recommendations for short, medium and long-term actions. In the

short term, the workgroup recommended that agencies provide information using the HHSC Weekly Management Briefing format. *For more information, contact Elaine Powell, at (512) 458-7303 or e-mail elaine.powell@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Disease Outbreaks/Investigations



West Nile Virus investigation

Zoonosis staff in Region I is continue to investigate an extraordinary number of potential West Nile Virus (WNV) cases in the region. The most recent count had Region 1 with 356 positive results to investigate (this included out-of-state residents tested and/or hospitalized in Region 1) and the next highest total was in Region 2/3 with 174 investigations. So far there have been 28 deaths recorded in the state as due to West Nile virus. Region 1 recorded 6 deaths. The deaths have been in Lubbock (2), Randall (2), Potter (1) and Castro (1). Staff are still conducting about 100 investigations, so more deaths may be credited to WNV.

The age range for the approximately 330 people with positive test results is 6 months to 100 years, with a mean age of 48.1. The age range for the 69 confirmed Meningo-encephalitic cases is 12-86, with a mean of 52.1. The 88 WN Fever cases have an age range of 6-89 with a mean age of 46.0. These figures will change as more investigations are concluded.

In addition to the WNV Fever and M-E cases, 12 St. Louis Encephalitis (SLE) cases have been confirmed along with 27 flavivirus infections, some of which will become either WNV or SLE cases and 20 Indeternminate results. Some of these may be resolved by CDC, but a number will not be resolved unless additional testing is performed. *For more information, contact James Alexander, Zoonosis Control, at (806) 767-0496 or e-mail james.alexander@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Training/Conferences/Meetings



2003 Texas SARS Summit, *Face to Face: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome and Influenza*

On November 19, TDH sponsored the 2003 Texas SARS Summit, *Face to Face: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome and Influenza*, which was held for an influential gathering of medical and public health leaders to discuss the latest scientific, clinical, public health, communications and psychosocial aspects of SARS and Influenza. Commissioner of Health Eduardo Sanchez gave the keynote address that outlined the Texas response to SARS and development of a draft SARS response plan for Texas. The 2003 Texas SARS Summit was attended by over 300 individuals and was available through a Webcast to another 1,200 through Texas. Information provided by clinical and epidemiological experts at this Summit will assist healthcare providers in preparing for the seasonal emergence of these similar respiratory diseases in the coming months. During the summit, the Health Alert Network was used to broadcast flu messages to 78% of Texas physicians. *For more information, contact Tom Betz, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail tom.betz@tdh.state.tx.us.*



ASTHO Youth Suicide Prevention Roundtable

On December 1-2, Commissioner of Health Eduardo Sanchez participated in the ASTHO Roundtable: “Collaboration Around Youth Suicide Prevention,” in New Orleans, Louisiana. Co-sponsored by the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, National Governor’s Association – Center for Best Practices, National Conference of State Legislators, and Council of Chief State School Officers, the roundtable focused on youth suicide prevention which is the 3rd leading cause of death among children 10 to 19 years of age. Along with Dr. Sanchez, there were other members of the Texas specific team, including State Representative Vicki Truitt, who are working to strategies to address youth suicide in Texas by:

- Expanding collaborations between public and private partners, including elected officials, state agencies, professional organizations, community groups, Texas State Strategic Health Partnership, Mental Health Summit, etc.
- Raising awareness through the media via op-ed articles, working with partners, etc.
- Requesting the Governor and Legislature to issue proclamations highlighting the importance of preventing youth suicide.
- Convening a state symposium in September 2004 during Suicide Prevention Week.

The Texas team will reconvene in January 2004 to share progress and ideas to keep moving this issue forward. *For more information, contact Florastine Mack, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-2021, or e-mail florastine.mack@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas EMS Conference 2003

On November 24, TDH sponsored the “Texas EMS Conference 2003,” which was held in San Antonio for more than 2,000 EMS providers. This annual conference gives attendees the opportunity to communicate with each other, attend educational workshops, and recognize outstanding organizations and individuals with awards. Commissioner of Health Eduardo Sanchez gave the welcoming address where he complimented EMS providers on their dedication to their work and their level of professionalism. Dr. Sanchez also thanked attendees for what they do to help protect Texans. *For more information, contact Kathy Perkins, Bureau of Emergency Management, at (512) 834-6700 or e-mail kathy.perkins@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Rabies in Americas Conference

Dr. Laura Robinson, Regional Zoonosis Control Veterinarian, participated in the XIV Annual Rabies in the Americas Conference held at Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia from October 19 through the 24. Dr. Robinson served as a moderator for the Wildlife Rabies session, and serves as the State representative for the US on the Rabies in the Americas Conference Steering Committee. *For more information, contact Dr. Laura Robinson, Regional Zoonosis Control, at (956) 423-0130, ext. 632, or e-mail laura.robinson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Hepatitis C Initiative

On November 5, Gary Heseltine, M.D., M.P.H, Staff Epidemiologist, presented “Hepatitis C and the Disproportionately Affected in Texas” at the 20 Annual Adult Protective Services (APS) Conference in San Antonio. Attendees were adult protective services caseworkers. Dr. Heseltine presented information on hepatitis C and its effects on the mentally ill, the homeless, minority groups, and examined a cross-section of these populations. *For more information, contact Gary Heseltine, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail gary.heseltine@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TB Conferences/Workshops Across Texas

From January 2003 to November 2003, the TB Education Center (TBEC) presented 21 conferences/workshops across the State of Texas educating approximately 1040 health care workers. Conference topics included: Nurse TB Case Management Workshop; DOT, Toxicity and Monitoring; Skin Test Workshop; Managing TB in the Community; Managing TB in Correctional Facilities; Community Response to TB; New Approaches to Treatment of TB: Putting the New Treatment Guidelines in to Practice; and Recognizing TB in Your Facility.

In September the TB Education Center collaborated with Ten Against TB (TATB), the US-Mexico Border Health Commission, and the Health Education Training Centers Alliance of Texas in a binational effort to provide tuberculosis training in Acuna/Del Rio and Juarez/El Paso. The events were a success and we look forward to future collaborations.

The CDC has provided funding to the TB Education Center to conduct two conferences in the month of December that would address protection against transmission of respiratory pathogens. The conferences will be held on December 3 in Dallas, and December 4 in San Antonio. *For more information, contact Stephanie Ott, TB Elimination Division, at (210) 534-8857, ext. 2227, or e-mail stephanie.ott@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TB Meetings

On September 23-25, Charles Wallace, M.D., Director of the TB Elimination Division, attended a Federal Task Force meeting in Bethesda, Maryland, to discuss how the various federal agencies would respond to the Institute of Medicine report Ending Neglect.

On October 27, representatives of the TB Elimination Division attended a meeting of the Southwest TB Controllers Association in Durango, Colorado to discuss: managing TB in low morbidity areas; court ordered isolation; detention of TB patients; and TB genotyping. On October 28-29, the same representatives attended the Four Corners TB-HIV conference.

The Director of the TB Elimination Division attended a CDC-sponsored meeting in Atlanta on October 22-24 to assist with the development of a DNA manual for TB controllers on the benefits of DNA analysis of isolates from TB patients in their jurisdiction. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Annual Quality Assurance Training

The Texas Vaccines for Children Program (TVFC) conducted its annual quality assurance training for the regions on November 3, 4, and 5. Approximately 50 staff were in attendance each day, including staff from Austin and the Quality Assurance Monitoring Division. The training included an update on the status of enrollment and recruitment for the TVFC, the number of educational site visits conducted year-to-date, and changes for 2004. The automated assessment tool was delivered and training provided on its use. The tool was developed by the quality assurance contractor, the Texas Medical Foundation, and is a key piece to completely automating the TVFC quality assurance process. Complete automation should be in place during the first half of 2004 as soon as the contractor has completed development of a website. *For more information, contact Jack Sims, Immunization Division, Texas Vaccines for Children Program, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail jack.sims@tdh.state.tx.us.*



STD Awareness Media Campaign

TDH STD Awareness Media Campaign in the Houston/Galveston media market, originally scheduled to end on October 19, concluded on October 26. The campaign has generated several calls for STD information to the Texas HIV/STD InfoLine from the Houston area. The radio and TV spots used can be seen at www.tdh.state.tx.us/hivstd/pie/stdmedia.htm. *For more information, contact Greg Beets, HIV/STD Health Resources Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail greg.beets@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Administration



Information Technology Consolidation

The new HHSC Chief Information Officer (CIO) position was re-opened for applications and closed October 24. The IT consolidation workgroup decided to modify DHS's Project Portfolio Management Systems for use among all HHS agencies. This system will be used to track project time, costs, and serve as a central repository for all electronic project documentation. An RFP will be used for a vendor to assist HHSC in developing a two (2) year technology road map. Also, agencies have been asked to identify staff associated with IT security so that they can begin working on HHSS security policy and procedures. *For more information, contact Tom Thornton, Information Systems, at (512) 458-7271 or e-mail tom.thornton@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Annual Financial Report

Pursuant to Texas Government Code, Sec. 2101.011, TDH submitted its Annual Financial Report to the Comptroller of Public Accounts on the November 20 due date. The TDH report will be combined with other state agencies' information to create a statewide financial statement to be used by creditors, investors and the public in general, to assess the financial condition of our state. *For more information, Wilson Day, Bureau of Financial Services, at (512) 458-7111, ext.1-6929, or e-mail wilson.day@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Benefits Proportional by Fund Report

The “Benefits Proportional by Fund Report” was submitted to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts and the State Auditor’s Office on November 19. This report is required by the General Appropriations Act and ensures that payments of benefit costs are proportional to a state agency funding from appropriated funds and federal receipts, unless a legal provision prohibits proportionality. *For more information, contact Kathleen Barnett, at (512) 458-7111, ext.1-6940, or e-mail kathleen.barnett@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Program Updates



Texas Missions of Mercy (TMOM) Host Health Fair/Dental Event

TDH, Division of Oral Health Staff volunteered to help with the health fair/dental event held in Georgetown. Dental professionals and other health care volunteers were recruited by the TMOM, the Texas Dental Association, and Texas Dentists for Healthy Smiles to provide free dental and other health related services to adults and children in the Williamson County area. Several thousand people from Georgetown and surrounding cities attended the event on November 7-9 at the Community Center in San Gabriel Park. The TMOM has sponsored three other similar events (i.e., twice in Tyler and once in El Paso) since 2001. Free health services and/or screenings for dental, vision, hearing, diabetes, high blood pressure, flu vaccines, tetanus vaccines, and well-child checkups were provided to the public. Plans to conduct another health fair/dental event in Georgetown are being considered. The turnout for these events has been overwhelming and the TMOM is always seeking volunteers for these events. *For more information, contact Dr. Jerry W. Felkner, Division of Oral Health, at (512) 458-7323 or e-mail jerry.felkner@tdh.state.tx.us; or contact the Texas Dental Association at (512) 443-3675; or the Texas Dentists for Healthy Smiles Foundation at (512) 448-2441.*



WIC Staff Testify at U.S. Congressional Field Hearing

Debbie Brookshire, Director, WIC Vendor Operations Division, testified on November 10, at the U.S. Congressional Field Hearing entitled "Organized Retail Theft: Conduit of Money Laundering." TDH staff from the Food and Drug Safety Division also testified. U.S. Congressmen John Carter (Texas, District 31) and Mark Souder (Indiana, District 3) held the hearing in Cypress to bring attention to the issue of organized retail theft, especially of infant formula. Representatives from the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Texas Attorney General's Office, H.E.B, Wal-Mart, the Gulf Coast Retailers Association, other law enforcement organizations, and TDH presented testimony and answered questions regarding retail theft and its possible link to funding of terrorist activities. Ms. Brookshire's testimony dealt with infant formula theft and the steps TDH has taken to address this issue. She emphasized the changes to WIC program rules and policies that require vendors participating in WIC to purchase infant formula from authorized sources. She also explained the new requirement in the WIC vendor agreement that requires authorized vendors to list the name of the business(es) from which they purchase infant formula and the Central File Number that indicates the business is licensed through TDH. The end result may be some legislation at the national level to address this issue. *For more information, contact Debbie Brookshire, WIC Vendor Operations Division, at (512) 341-4400, ext. 2200, or e-mail debbie.brookshire@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Title X Competing Continuation Grant Applications

The Family Planning Division submitted the competitive, continuation State Coordinated Title X Grant Application on December 1 for the project period April 1, 2004 through March 31, 2009. The application reflects an increase in funds for the oversight and management of the Title X project. The current Title X project provides funds to 38 Title X Delegate agencies for statewide family planning services. *For more information, contact Dr. Cindy Jones, Family Planning Division, at (512) 458-7796 or e-mail cindy.jones@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Nuclear Emergency Response Drill

On November 19, fifty-five technical and administrative personnel from the Bureau of Radiation Control participated in a nuclear emergency response exercise at the Comanche Peak Nuclear Electric Generating Station outside Glen Rose. The exercise was graded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Department's costs for the exercise are reimbursed by Comanche Peak. *For more information, contact Alice Rogers, Compliance and Inspection Division, at (512) 834-6629 or e-mail alice.rogers@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Two Regional DNA Laboratories Chosen

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention chose two laboratories, one in California and one in Michigan, to perform the DNA analysis of all isolates in the United States that are culture positive for *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. Samples from Texas will be sent to the laboratory in California. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Refugee Health

On October 14-15, the Refugee Health Screening Program hosted a site visit as part of the Refugee Health Information Network (RHIN) project. Three visitors, from the Center for Public Service Communications (CPSC), Georgetown University, and the National Libraries of Medicine, respectively, presented to staff of local programs from Austin-Travis County, Harris County, and Tarrant County. Topics discussed or presented were: equipment and internet connectivity at refugee screening sites; training in using the internet to research medical and cultural information useful for refugee services; a list serve for providers to share experiential information gathered from serving refugees; and web space for centralized access to translated health education materials for local and state programs serving refugees. *For more information, contact Sam Householder, Refugee Health Screening Program, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail sam.householder@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Hansen's Disease Meeting

On November 3-5, the field nursing staff of the Hansen's Disease Program met in Austin, to prepare the proposal for funding to the National Hansen's Disease Program (NHDP). The one-year base period begins January 1, 2004, with two 12-month options. *For more information contact Virginia Enriquez, TB Elimination Division Hansen's Disease Program, (512) 458-7447 or e-mail virginia.enriquez@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TATB Activities

In partnership with the Francis J. Curry National Tuberculosis Center, Ten Against TB is hosting “Tuberculosis Update” on November 10 in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico, and on November 12 in El Paso. This course is for clinicians and other personnel working in TB control in the U.S.-Mexico border region. On November 13, the TATB Technical Committee members will meet in El Paso to develop priorities for the new action plan, which will be presented to the Border Health Commission at its meeting on December 12. With funding assistance from the Office of Border Health, 7 surplus bio-safety hoods finished a decontamination process on October 31. The surplus lab equipment plus 32 surplus computers will be ready for transportation to the border area the week of November 10. The Border Health Commission will assist in the transfer across the border and subsequent distribution of this surplus equipment to TB programs in Mexico. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us or Jose Moreira, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail jose.moreira@tdh.state.tx.us.*



ImmTrac Presents Draft Proposed Rules to Stakeholders

An informal stakeholder briefing was held on November 12 to provide an overview of the draft proposed rules for ImmTrac, the Texas immunization registry. Acting Program Director Claude Longoria delivered a PowerPoint presentation addressing the rules development process. Proposed rules changes were outlined and input solicited from stakeholders. There were approximately 10 attendees. The briefing was held in the TDH auditorium and was followed by a question and answer session. *For more information, contact Adriana Rhames or Claude Longoria, ImmTrac Registry, Immunization Division, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail adriana.rhames@tdh.state.tx.us or claudelongoria@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Implementing HIV Rapid Testing (OraQuick) in Texas

Two identified pilot sites began using HIV Rapid Testing (OraQuick) in September. The other three sites began using OraQuick in October. The purpose of the pilot tests is to examine the effect of HIV rapid testing on our HIV and STD testing sites. The pilot tests will be evaluated at the end of the year. *For more information, contact Larry Cuellar, Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail larry.cuellar@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Regional Updates

Region 1



Promoting Influenza immunizations for at-risk populations

The Immunization Program in Region 1 has offered 61 clinics with 3,296 total clients seen accounting for 3,951 total doses (all vaccines) administered. Of those doses, 1,507 were for influenza primarily to clients aged 6 years to adult, though 34 younger children received influenza doses, as well. *For more information, contact Shirley Richardson, Immunization Division, at (806) 767-0417 or e-mail shirley.richardson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Syndromic surveillance System

In October, Region 1 installed a syndromic surveillance system in each of the region's hospital emergency rooms. The regional Rapid Syndrome Validation Project, or RSVP, a system developed by Sandia Laboratories in Albuquerque, NM and beta tested in 13 regional hospitals, was deployed in all 23 hospitals within Region 1 jurisdiction and was fully operational on November 1. RSVP is designed to rapidly detect unusual outbreaks of illnesses that may be the result of bioterrorism and other naturally occurring outbreaks of illnesses or other public health threats. The system is designed to capture illness trends of both reportable and non-reportable diseases. Region 1 is considering expanding RSVP to include school absenteeism and animal illness. *For more information, contact Barry Wilson, Immunization Division, at (806) 767-0496 or e-mail barry.wilson@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Region 4/5 North



Access to Health care: Controversies and Solutions

On November 8, a conference was held at the University of Texas Health Center at Tyler designed for physicians, registered nurses, practice administrators and other healthcare professionals interested in access to care issues. The ranks of the uninsured increased by 2.4 million last year as insurance costs kept rising. According to a recent Census Bureau report over 43.6 million Americans are without healthcare insurance. Commissioner of Health, Eduardo Sanchez, gave the keynote address on "A Public Health Perspective." Panel discussions were with representatives of Trinity Mother Frances Hospital, Tyler, East Texas Medical Center, Tyler, Longview Regional Hospital, Longview, and University of Texas Health Center at Tyler, a question and answer period followed the lectures. *For more information, contact Paul K. McGaha, Regional Director, at (903) 533-5230 or e-mail paul.mcgha@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Region 6/5 South



Biowatch Initiative

On October 9-12, Zoonosis Control (ZC) Region 6/5S, 9/10, 11, and central office staff members collaborated with Local Animal Control Agencies (City of Houston, Harris County, and Montgomery County), and Center of Disease Control and Prevention-Fort Collins to execute rodent trapping in 3 areas throughout the city of Houston and Harris county. Duration of trapping activities lasted 3 days, which included orientation for the multi-agency team, environmental assessment of areas, dead carcass pickup, trapping of rodents, and logistics of processing samples. A total of 1,757 traps were set at 3 different sites, yielding 102 specimens (mice, rats, opossums). The specimens were processed in a Biohazard Level 3 mobile unit and tested for *Franssiella tularensis*. All specimens tested negative. *For more information, contact Dana Beckham, Zoonosis Control, at (713) 767-3300 or e-mail dana.beckham@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Social Workers make a wish come true

Brittany, a nine-year-old child in Beaumont, was diagnosed with leukemia in December 2002. She has been receiving radiation and chemotherapy treatments at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston since that time. Make a Wish Foundation of the Texas Gulf Coast, Inc., offered a wish to Brittany in August. Brittany's wish was for all her family to go to Disney World in Florida. Brittany is very close to her grandmother, who works for DHS Long Term Care, that is collocated with TDH offices in Beaumont. The Reaud Foundation, a local philanthropic entity, was contacted by Beaumont Social Workers and upon Region 6/5 South request, immediately donated \$250.00. Give the Kids the World, the Make a Wish Resort near Disney World, also generously included the grandmother in the condo and meals. The entire family was very appreciative. *For more information, contact Judy Mellings, CSHCN Program, Region 6/5 South, at (409) 838-7182 or e-mail judy.mellings@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Presentations

On October 31, Regional Director Dr. Celine Hanson gave two presentations (one on Obesity and another on Childhood Tuberculosis) at the 19th Annual Update in Medicine Conference sponsored by the Area Health Education of South Texas in Laredo.

On October 11, Regional Director, Dr. Celine Hanson participated in an American Lung Association sponsored conference on Asthma Management in Austin. And on October 14 – 16, Dr. Celine Hanson participated in the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices in Atlanta. *For more information regarding, contact, I. Celine Hanson, Regional Director, Region 6/5 South, at (713) 767-3019 or e-mail celine.hanson@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Regions 9/10



Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) Wellness New Director

Dr. Daniel Gutierrez has been named Director of the US-Mexico El Paso Border Field office. Dr. Gutierrez, a Peru native, replaces outgoing Director, Dr. Alfonzo Ruiz. PAHO recently celebrated its 100-year anniversary. The border office is the only field office outside Latin America. *For more information, contact Blanca Serrano, Office of Border Health, at (915) 834-7690 or e-mail blanca.serrano@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Ten Against TB

The Regional office hosted a work meeting of the technical committee of Ten Against TB. The committee is putting together a strategic plan to address binational control needs along the border. *For more information, contact Jose Moreira, TB Elimination, at (512) 458-7436 or e-mail jose.moreira@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Epidemiology Response Team

Surveillance and Epidemiology staff from the Regional and Central office are working to contain a pertussis outbreak in Alpine. A total of 9 laboratory confirmed cases (age range 6 weeks to 21 years old) and 16 clinically diagnosed cases (age range up to 68 years old) were identified. Antibiotics prophylaxis was administered to over 130 household and school contacts. Medical information releases and control recommendations were widely distributed to the community. *For more information, contact Susan Bell, Immunizations Program, at (432) 837-3877 or e-mail susan.bell@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Binational TB Training

The Regional office assisted the Francis J. Curry National TB Training Center with TB training. Two clinical courses were held in Matamoros, Mexico and El Paso. Over 600 participants from the US and Mexico attended the course. *For more information, contact Miguel A. Escobedo, Regional Director, at (915) 834-7680 or e-mail miguel.escobedo@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Regions 11



Immunization Clinic

A total of 1,855 adults were vaccinated with the flu vaccine throughout the region at nutrition centers, adult day care center and outreach clinics. The immunization staff conducted a mass immunization clinic in Corpus Christi to administer Hep A and other vaccines to students that were not in compliance with the school requirements. Over 1,850 students were immunized during the clinic. A coalition of school nurses, student nurses, NAVI reserve, Nueces County Health District and TDH Immunization worked together to hold the mass clinic. *For more information, contact Ivette Nunez, Immunization Program, at (956) 423-0130, ext. 546, or e-mail ivette.nunez@tdh.state.tx.us*



Brownsville/Matamoros Sister City Project for Women's Health

The office of Border Health regional & central office staff participated in the first Brownsville/Matamoros Sister City Project for women's health in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico to identify interview questions, data management and analyses for survey implementation. *For more information, contact Ramiro Gonzales, Office of Border Health, at (956) 423-0130, ext. 637, or e-mail ramiro.gonzales@tdh.state.tx.us.*